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A Contemporary Newspaper Account of Joe Polis

[Editor's note: The following article appeared in the *Boston Daily Bee*, 8 August 1854, p. 1, col. 6. Compare Thoreau's account of Polis's dealings with Bishop Fenwick of Boston and the local Catholic priest in *The Maine Woods* (Princeton Edition, pp. 293-4).]

THE PENOBSCOT INDIANS—SOMETHING INTERESTING IN RELATION TO THEM.—The following interesting information on the Penobscot Indians, is taken from a recent letter in the *Puritan Recorder* of this city. It was written at Oldtown, Me.:

My special object in writing this communication is to give some facts respecting the Penobscot Tribe of Indians, from whom this town derived its name. Their residence is upon the islands in the Penobscot, extending some fifty miles and containing some thousands of acres. Most of the tribe dwell upon the south part of the islands, nearest to this town. The tribe like others all over the land has been gradually wasting away. It numbers less than five hundred, of whom many are constantly absent to secure the means of living. The tribe still clings to its ancient custom of retaining at its head, a Chief, or King, or Governor, whose office is hereditary. Some are anxious to have the office elective. Hence two parties were formed who became mutually hostile, and for a time were in open and bitter conflict. At length the parties agreed upon terms of peace, and pledged to each other to bury the Tomahawk at the foot of the Liberty Pole which they had erected at the place of mutual concord for the future. Here was their common rallying point, until the Catholic Bishop and Priests came with the design to cut down that Pole and erect in its stead the cross, the emblem of Romanism. The day came for this transaction. The Indians assembled. The Bishop and Priests appeared in their gorgeous robes and imposing movements to the spot.— There, the preparatory measures having been taken, the Bishop was just giving his orders to apply the

axe; when, directly before him, stepped up one of the Indians, a noble, athletic and fearless man, and taking his stand between him and the Liberty Pole—he said to the Bishop:—"You go too far, Bishop. This Pole my property. He part my property. No white man any right to touch 'em. Suppose Governor of State himself come here; he no right to touch 'em,—Indian property. Who are you? Foreigner,—you come from Massachusetts,—and you go to destroy Indian property. *You no touch 'em.*" The Bishop replied, "You Indians can't understand,—I am your Bishop.—I know what is best for you. You are ignorant,—you don't know." To which the Indian replied: "You say true, Bishop,—the Indian be ignorant,—but who make him ignorant?— You Bishop, and you Priests. You been here on Indian island 125 years. You never teach Indian to read one word. You bury Indian one foot deeper in darkness every year. Now you get him 125 feet deep, and then you tell him, '*He no see.*' The Priests tell him, 'Learning is not suitable for Indian, learning was not made for Indian. That which is good for white man is not good for them.' Now, Bishop, you show me one place in Bible where it says learning is good for white man,—he no good for Indian,—and let me carry 'em to Oldtown and show to my friend (meaning Rev. Mr. Merrill,) and see if you read 'em right."

With such reasoning the Indian stood his ground; the Bishop and Priests were compelled to retire; and the Liberty Pole is still standing. After a little time, the same Indian said to the Priest who had been residing there for years—and only to depress the people: "I guess the best way you live somewhere else. Suppose you live here; may be you get hurt." The Priest took the hint, left the island, and has not resided there since.

This young man, who took such a decided stand for the tribe, is now one of the Counsel of the Nation, and was their representative two years since to the Legislature of Maine. His deep feeling and earnest efforts for the improvement of his brethren, are traceable to a striking event. Some ten years since, among those who visited the Island, was a pious lady from Boston. She sought those who could read, and finding a young Indian near the church, who answered her

inquiry in the affirmative, she presented him with a bible. He was a boy in whom the priest had expressed great interest, had taken him to his house and had learned [sic] him thus to read the English language. That boy was then residing with the Priest. He received the Bible gratefully and read it with deep interest. He soon found its teachings to be unlike those of the priest. This increased his interest in it, and caused him to conceal the Book in his bosom when not reading it. At length, by accident, he was called suddenly from his room, where he left the bible upon his table; the Priest on coming in saw it, and asked him how he obtained it. The boy frankly told him.

The priest then said, "*It is a bad book,*" and threw it into the fire. This, however, did not settle the question with the youth; he secured another copy and read and reflected, and was hopefully led to Christ as the only hope of his soul. Not long after he was called to his dying scene; when he entreated his elder brother to labor for the improvement of the tribe, and for its relief from the degradation to which Romanism had so long reduced it. That elder brother is the same person who has been described above. He and others are now active in efforts to elevate the character of the tribe; and, to furnish means of education for the children and youth, they have had, at times, a school upon the island. The pupils have learned rapidly, and as they improve, have an increasing desire to improve.

Two years since the legislature paid an extra grant of \$200 to furnish means of improvement. Last year they increased the amount to \$300; and, under the direction of their real and valued friend, Rev. Mr. Merrill, the tribe are receiving advantages for continued improvement. They are feeling more and more the need of it. Obstacles exist which they are laboring to remove. They are compelled to leave the Islands and traverse the country to obtain support; thus taking the children away from a settled home and means of instruction. It is hoped relief on this point will be obtained, by establishing a deposit for the articles manufactured by them, and in return supplying them with the means of living. In respect to religion they are in a transition state. Many of them are totally dissatisfied with Romanism, and disgusted with the priests; and could a judicious course be taken, by those in whom they confide, the light of the Gospel might reach them, and its precious hopes be theirs. They are a very interesting people. No one can visit them and converse with them, without deep sympathy. As a people they are honest and upright in all their dealings, and are treated with respect and kindness by the surrounding

communities. They cherish and practice principles of peace. They were never known, in our revolutionary struggles, to act against the Colonies, nor since, against the nation. Nor have they been in conflict with other tribes, except in cases of self-defence and protection. It is hoped that amid the benevolent activities of this age, they will not be overlooked by Christians who know them and can fully appreciate their condition.

Yours truly, D.S.



[22 October 1857]

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Walter Harding

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I am indebted to the following for information sent in for this bibliography: E. Allison, G. Booker, C. Bray, J. Burger, K. Cameron, A. Christianson, W. Cullen, J. Dawson, P. Dooley, D. Harding, E. Jacobsen, R. Jones, K. Kasegawa, C. Kesler, A. McGrath, E. Schofield, E. Walker, M. Walker, and J. Welch. Please keep me informed of items I have missed and new ones as they appear. Walter Harding, 19 Oak Street, Geneseo, NY 14454.



[15 July 1858]

The 1991 Thoreau Society Annual Meeting

The Thoreau Society, which this summer celebrated its fiftieth anniversary, held its 1991 annual meeting at the First Parish Church in Concord, Massachusetts, on Saturday, 13 July. The Society's board of directors met the preceding afternoon in the First Parish for its annual meeting, and the members of the board gathered at the same location afterward for their annual dinner.

After Edmund A. Schofield, president, called the meeting to order, Walter Harding, secretary, asked the assembled members of the Society to accept the report of the 1990 annual meeting as printed in the Summer 1990 *Bulletin*. The members accepted the report.

Eric Parkman Smith, treasurer, announced that he did not have the figures he usually had available during his report, mostly because our auditor had recently suffered a heart attack, but also because the Jubilee was still underway, which made the Society's financial condition at that time difficult to assess. Nonetheless, Smith expressed a cautionary note and pointed out that "if the Jubilee profits equal or exceed . . . the support which the Society has given to the project, our financial position will be substantially improved"; otherwise, our financial problems will be serious. At the conclusion of Smith's report, the members voted to accept it.

Jack Clymer, representing the nominating committee, presented the following slate of officers: president, Edmund A. Schofield; treasurer, Eric Parkman Smith; secretary, Bradley P. Dean; founding secretary, Walter Harding; all for terms of one year; and Robert C. Baron and Lloyd Simon, members of the board of directors for three years. They were all unanimously elected.

Schofield announced a few minor changes and additions to the program for the annual meeting. Mary P. Sherwood proposed "that the Thoreau Society set up a committee to initiate plans to develop a Thoreau World Center." After noting the similarity between Sherwood's motion and one adopted by the board of directors the preceding day, Schofield asked the members to endorse the board's earlier decision to appoint a committee to study various important issues related to the long-term goals and activities of the Society. The members endorsed the board's decision unanimously.

The Society was extremely pleased to be introduced to and hear from several of its foreign members and friends. Professor Nikita E. Pokrovsky, a member of the Society from the Soviet Union, introduced two of his fellow Soviets: Mikhail T. Gusev, an officer of the Soviet Peace Committee, and Piotr M. Saveliev, President of World Without Violence, both of whom congratulated the Society on this, the occasion of its fiftieth anniversary. Professor Koh Kasegawa introduced three of his fellow scholars from Japan and expressed their good wishes to the Society. Later, the Reverend Hirotsugu "Luke" Inoue and Professor Yuji Nakata, president and vice president (respectively) of the 140-plus-member Thoreau Society of Japan, spoke to the

members and conveyed the congratulations of their organization.

The two charter members of the Society in attendance were introduced: Walter Harding and Frederick McGill.

Representatives of organizations that have worked to preserve the legacy of Thoreau addressed the Society: Mary Sherwood for Walden Forever Wild, Thomas Blanding for the Thoreau Country Conservation Alliance, Elizabeth Witherell for the Princeton Edition of *The Writings of Henry D. Thoreau*, Kathi Anderson for the Walden Woods Project, John Forbes for Walden Earthnet, and Wesley Mott for the Ralph Waldo Emerson Society.

Schofield announced that the board of directors is working on a statement of appreciation and a memorial tribute to Judge Ralph Chapman, the Society's parliamentarian.

Walter Harding delivered the keynote address on his reminiscences of the Thoreau Society's early years, and Edmund Schofield delivered the presidential address, "Walden: Symbol of Hope."

In the afternoon, Thomas Blanding conducted the annual Thoreau Quiz in the First Parish vestry, the Lyceum was open for the members to socialize and view exhibits, and Marcia Moss showed the Thoreau treasures at a special fiftieth-anniversary display in the Concord Free Public Library. In the evening, Charles F. Fink lectured in the First Parish vestry on "The Wreck of the *St. John*" as part of Thoreau's Cape Cod travels. Other events took place during the day as part of the Jubilee and are mentioned in the Jubilee program.

scholarship and eventually to my teaching of *Walden* in my own survey courses. My discovery of Thoreau occurred when I got to the point of knowing how to appreciate what it means to live deliberately and to front those so-called essential facts of life.

The point of all this is that my discovery depended in large measure on the real connection I could eventually form with the sense of Thoreau. My discoveries of Thoreau continue, and I see it as my responsibility as a teacher to help my students make that connection and make that discovery (an aim that we know Thoreau himself sought in his own classroom). A few years ago a biology colleague and I led a group of students to the Boundary Waters Canoe Area in Northern Minnesota. The travel-study course was entitled "Thoreau and the Wilderness Experience," and required the students to read *Maine Woods* and *Walden*, and accompany us on a ten-day canoe trip.

Following the trip, the participants were asked to write an essay reflecting on the experience of the reading and trip. I was pleased to see in those essays that the participants made genuine connections between Thoreau and the wilderness experience. It was apparent that they had truly discovered Thoreau and knew what Thoreau meant by the "tonic of wilderness."



[27 December 1857]

I Discover Thoreau

David Fuller

I did not discover Thoreau as an undergraduate, but I did read *Walden* in a large, gray anthology. I was hardly in the frame of mind to read the assignment (roughly pages 1200 to 1400) as reservedly as Mr. Thoreau had written the words. Rather, I read quickly and superficially to fulfill an assignment for a survey course. While my instructor pointed to the prominent symbols in the text and described Thoreau's "place" in literary history, I did not have the ability nor the motivation at that time for truly discovering Thoreau.

Years later in graduate school I reread *Walden* (this time not in an anthology) and then read it again. My new-found excitement for Thoreau led me to his other writings and to

To the Members of the Thoreau Society

Walter Harding

I wish to express my heart-felt thanks to the members of the Thoreau Society for commissioning Thomas Oboe Lee to compose and play at the Thoreau Jubilee "That Mountain: A Musical Drama in Seven Parts" in honor of my completing fifty years as secretary of the Society. What a complete and absolute surprise it was for me to attend the concert that night and find myself the dedicatee. And what an even greater delight it was to hear the music that so beautifully caught the strength and individuality of Thoreau. The mountain dream that Mr. Lee uses as his climax is based on one of my favorite

passages from the *Journal*. It is a beautiful piece, and I am both proud and grateful for it.

And once again I want to thank you all for permitting me to be your secretary for half a century. It has added much to the joy and meaning of my life.

From Moscow to Concord: A Letter to Our President

[Editor's note: Edmund A. Schofield received the following letter from three of our members in Moscow via facsimile on 27 August 1991. The "civil disobedience campaign" mentioned in the second paragraph of the letter refers to the participation of the signatories in the popular resistance to the recent coup attempt in the Soviet Union. At least one of them, Professor Pokrovsky, manned the barricades set up to keep Soviet tanks away from the Russian Parliament Building. The *Worcester Telegram and Gazette* of 22 August 1991 contains a report of Professor Pokrovsky's experiences during the coup. The article is titled "Thoreau Scholar Put Life on Line."]

Mr. Edmund Schofield
President
The Thoreau Society
156 Belknap St.,
Concord, Mass. 01742

Moscow, U.S.S.R
August 16-27, 1991

Dear Mr. President:

We thank you most cordially for a wonderful time in Massachusetts. The Jubilee was a great success, and we will never forget the warmth and hospitality of the members of the Thoreau Society. In our opinion, the conference made a considerable contribution to the Thoreau studies, and we hope to see its materials published in the future.

It is the true irony of the history that so soon after the Thoreau conference and a great time in Concord we were compelled to become participants of the civil disobedience campaign in Moscow. There was something very symbolic in this. At that time we were thinking about you all. Your fax message reached us recently.

We are still most willing to invite the delegation of the Thoreau Society to visit us here any time at your convenience. Please keep us informed about your plans.

Please convey our warmest regards to the members of the Thoreau Society and the participants of the Jubilee.

Very truly yours,

Michael Gusev
Nikita Pokrovsky
Piotr Saveliev

Simms on Walden

Kevin J. Hayes

When William Gilmore Simms was in New York during the mid-1850s, he wrote a series of letters to the *Charleston Mercury* which were published under the heading "From Our Literary Correspondent" and signed "Lorris." Simms confessed his authorship in a 20 December 1854 letter to Evert Duyckinck (*The Letters of William Gilmore Simms*, eds. Mary C. Simms Oliphant, Alfred Taylor Odell, and T. C. Duncan Eaves [Columbia, 1954], 3:350). The number and length of the New York literary correspondence prevented Simms's editors from including them in the collected *Letters*, but the *Mercury* letters contain many delightful comments about antebellum New York literary life from a Southern perspective.

In the 8 February 1855 *Mercury*, Simms's letter was headed "Current Literature" and included the following comments:

Of our native Essayists, the same publishers [Ticknor and Fields] have recently given us several volumes of interest and merit. Among these is a somewhat queerly conceived narrative of a Yankee philosopher; whose question is upon how little he can live and be virtuous; feed and be charitable; clothe himself and others; and test both parties; first as to what they can endure, in the way of privation, before he bestows upon either of them a shirt or a supper.

The conception is that of a pure Yankee. It could be made by no other. It is carrying out the antique Puritan philosophy to its proper results, in all social matters. This queer, well-written book is called "Walden; or Life in the Woods." It is by HENRY D. THOREAU; whose intellect we should greatly wrong, did we not describe it as one well calculated to inspire the respect and compel the watchful consideration of yours. His book is full of a speculative interest, such as results from the continued exercise of thought in practical affairs.

Henry Salt to Dr. Fred S. Piper: Two Letters

S. Lawrence Whipple

[Editor's note: The following letters are among the possessions of one of Mr. Whipple's Lexington friends whose family Dr. Piper, the first vice president of the Thoreau Society, knew well. The portrait Salt speaks of is a horrible one done for the *Monitor* and looks more like Whitman than Thoreau. The poem is by Odell Shepard. Most of Dr. Piper's papers are in the Cary Memorial Library in Lexington.]

21 Cleveland Road, Brighton
March 30, 1932

Dear Dr. Piper.

I am greatly obliged by your kindness in sending me the "Christian Science Monitor" with the portrait of Thoreau.

I think the drawing by W. Sturges is *most striking* and seems to give a more real impression of Thoreau than any of the published portraits.

The verses, too, are a very different thing from what one is accustomed to see in newspapers, strong and beautiful at once. I like especially the line "Living his life to the very core & rind." This a case of good artist in combination with good poet! I shall very carefully keep the page of the paper, and show it to other Thoreau lovers whom I know.

Yrs sincerely,

Henry S. Salt

[Note to Dr. Piper postmarked Dec. 30, 1932:]

Sorry to say I have been laid up with pneumonia ever since I received your last letter. Yes, we saw the Adams family, and like them very much, but I think you must take this as my (probably) last letter. Farewell, with all kind recollections.

Henry S. Salt

Jung and Thoreau "See Alike"

Raymond P. Tripp, Jr.

I have always been impressed by how often Thoreau anticipates the thought of twentieth-century thinkers. Aniela Jaff, Carl C. Jung's

secretary in his later years, has reconfirmed my impression. She tells us that on one "black day" when things had not gone well:

we had been working out of doors by the lake—I saw, to my amazement, Jung bending down and looking at the lake from between his legs. . . . He told me to do the same. . . . I complied and likewise looked at the landscape upside down. Then Jung expatiated on the structure of the eye. Several times he came back to the reasons why the world and things looked better, and were perceived more correctly, if you took the in-verse view of them. . . . It took me quite a long time to decipher the message . . . that under these conditions the black day was in fact a bright one!¹

The equivalent passage from *Walden*, "The Ponds," springs immediately to mind:

I have seen whence came the expression, "the glassy surface of a lake." When you invert your head, it looks like a thread of finest gossamer stretched across the valley, and gleaming against the distant pine woods, separating one stratum of the atmosphere from another.²

The *Journal* for 4 March 1952 specifically mentions subverting the head and looking between the legs:

I look between my legs up the river across Fair Haven. Subverting the head, we refer things to the heavens; the sky becomes the ground of the picture, and where the river breaks through low hills, which slope to meet each other a quarter of a mile off, appears a mountain pass, so much nearer to heaven.³

"Subverting the head," and thus putting spiritual things first, we can "decipher the message" and see why "the world, and things" are then "perceived more correctly."

Notes

¹ *From the Life and Work of C. G. Jung* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 134.

² *Walden and Other Writings of Henry David Thoreau*, ed. Brooks Atkinson (New York: Random House, 1937), 159.

³ *Journal*, eds. Bradford Torrey and Francis H. Allen, (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1906), III, 333. See also V, 337 (1 Sept. 1852); V, 340 (2 Sept. 1852); and VI, 17 (11 Dec. 1853).

Further Doctoral Dissertations

(Copies of this dissertation may be ordered from University Microfilms in Ann Arbor, MI.)

Henry Thoreau's Exaggerations: His Theory and Philosophy of Language; Castellini, Edgar M., Ph.D.; University of California, Davis, 1991.

Henry Thoreau's art of prose composition was in large part constructed upon his understanding of the analogical, primitive, and derivative "wisdom" and potentiality of words. His systematic and wide-ranging study of literature, languages, and philology gave his prose theoretical sophistication and philosophical integrity; this dissertation is a comprehensive analysis of the central role played by Thoreau's theory and philosophy of language in his writing. This analysis affords new interpretations of Thoreau's language, artistic purposes, and Transcendentalism.

How Thoreau developed his sophisticated and yet unorthodox philosophy of language, from his first published book (*A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*) through his mature and final publications (*Walden* and "Walking"), forms the core of this dissertation. Other chapters study the Neo-platonic and Vedic influence upon his theory of language, his predicative style, and his threefold conception of language as ethical, germinal, and hypæthral or spiritual. Thoreau's mastery of derivation, analogy, phonology, and semantic play allowed this author philologically to "exaggerate" in every sentence he wrote, to craft a literary language of multiple and Transcendental signification.

Notes & Queries

Heaven Is Under Our Feet: A Book for Walden Woods, edited by Don Henley and Dave Marsh, was recently published by Longmeadow Press and is already in its second 20,000-copy printing. Royalties and a portion of the proceeds from the book will be donated to the Walden Woods Project. Among the sixty-eight contributors are Paula Abdul, Kirstie Alley, Robert Bly, Jimmy Carter, Cesar Chavez, Tom Cruise, Louise Erdrich, Whoopi Goldberg, Jesse Jackson, Bette Midler, Wesley T. Mott, Gregory Peck, Robert Redford, Pat Riley, Edmund A. Schofield, Wallace Stegner, Sting, Meryl Streep, Paul Tsongas, and Kurt Vonnegut.

Our president, Edmund A. Schofield, informs us that the proceedings of the Thoreau Society Jubilee will be published by Fulcrum Publishing of Golden, Colorado, in either May or June 1992. Schofield is editing the book, which will be titled *Thoreau's World and Ours: A Natural Legacy*.

From "A Concert of Tenses: An Interview with Jeanie Thompson," in Tess Gallagher, *A Concert of Tenses: Essays on Poetry* (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan Press, 1986), p. 42: "The Irish have a wonderful saying: 'Beware of occasions which demand new clothes.' This is a warning that one's true and honest bearing in the world may be inappropriate by an occasion which asks you to appear as anyone other than yourself. Critics are under this terrible pressure of new clothes I think." From *Walden* (Princeton edition), p. 23: "I say, beware of all enterprises that require new clothes, and not rather a new wearer of clothes. If there is not a new man, how can the new clothes be made to fit? If you have any enterprise before you, try it in your old clothes." Thoreau also used the "beware of all enterprises" phrase in the first *Walden* manuscript (1847). Does anyone know if the saying originated with the Irish, as Gallagher claims?

A "concept album" of twelve musical pieces inspired by *Walden* is being assembled by United States Education Systems. The album, called *Reflections on Walden Pond*, will feature a "blend of popular and new age music," along with quotations from Thoreau, Emerson, and other sources. For further information, contact *Reflections on Walden Pond*, Attn: Vic Hochee, 1498 Deercrest Drive, Devore, CA 92407 (Tel: 714-887-5365).

Please continue to send items for "Additions to the Thoreau Bibliography" to your founding secretary, Walter Harding. But please send all other items for the *Bulletin* to your secretary, Bradley P. Dean.

The Thoreau Society, Inc. is an informal gathering of students and admirers of Henry David Thoreau. Edmund A. Schofield, president; Eric Parkman Smith, treasurer; Bradley P. Dean, secretary. Dues: \$20; students \$10; family \$35; benefactor \$100; life \$500. Address communications to the secretary at Route 2, Box 36, Greenville, NC 28513; send dues to the Thoreau Society, Inc., 156 Belknap Street, Concord, MA 01742.